

Elevating Health Literacy: Researching the Landscape

Antonio P. DeRosa, MS, MLIS, AHIP | Judy C. Stribling, MS, MLS, AHIP

Samuel J. Wood Library & C.V. Starr Biomedical Information Center, Weill Cornell Medicine, New York, NY

Objective

The authors explored viewer satisfaction level and use of interactive tools contained within a four-panel traveling Interactive Health Literacy and Consumer Health Exhibit (Exhibit) and subject guide designed to raise awareness of and address the extreme problems low health literacy creates in the United States.

Results

Preliminary data from 129 surveys (n = 129) provide insight into opinions about health literacy. Respondents reported comfort levels with health information in three domains: importance, ability to assess and understand, and usage in life. Respondents 'strongly agree' (n = 100) it is important to be informed about health issues. Respondents 'disagree' (n = 50) and 'strongly disagree' (n = 17) that it is easy to assess the reliability of information. A majority of respondents reported they use information in their life or for people close to them, 'strongly agree' (n = 49) and 'agree' (n = 65).

Methods

Viewers of the Exhibit offer feedback through surveys in paper or electronic format. Health literacy awareness and Exhibit satisfaction are recorded using 'yes' or 'no' questions and Likert scale statements. All survey results are recorded in a HIPAA compliant REDCap database. The Exhibit premiered at a health fair held in Manhattan, New York in September 2018.


Conclusions

The data requirements for this research protocol are not yet complete. Data will be statistically analyzed upon completion. The Exhibit will travel to other medical libraries and medical school campuses in different areas of the country. The authors believe input from future Exhibit viewers at other locations will reveal important additional insights.

EXPLORING HEALTH LITERACY


WHAT IS IT? Health literacy is an individual's ability to *understand and act on* health information.

Over **80 MILLION** adults in the United States have basic or below literacy skills.



Individuals with low health literacy may have trouble reading and understanding food labels, completing health forms, measuring medications, speaking with healthcare providers about their symptoms, or following self-care instructions.

9 OUT OF 10 adults may lack skills to manage health and prevent disease.




LOW HEALTH LITERACY

- INCREASED COST
- MORE HOSPITAL VISITS
- DECREASED SATISFACTION

HIGH HEALTH LITERACY SKILLS

- Analyzing services
- Appreciating risks and benefits
- Managing medications
- Communicating with providers
- Understanding test results
- Locating health information

Good health literacy is possible when health professionals communicate with patients in PLAIN AND CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE LANGUAGE!



Developed resources reported in this Exhibit are supported by the National Library of Medicine (NLM), National Institutes of Health (NIH) under cooperative agreement number UG4LM012342 with the University of Pittsburgh, Health Sciences Library System. The content is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily represent the official views of the National Institutes of Health.

UNDERSTANDING

Healthcare providers **must consider** the health literacy level of every patient; some groups of people may have more problems with health information than others.



HEALTH LITERACY = REAL IMPACT

- AGING POPULATION**: Older adults have more chronic illnesses, and face unique issues related to physical and cognitive functioning that can make it difficult for them to find and use appropriate health information.
- MEDICATION ADHERENCE**: Taking the right medication at the right time improves health outcomes. Studies show individuals with low health literacy are less likely to take medicine appropriately or be able to identify their medications.
- PREVENTIVE SERVICES**: People with low health literacy are less likely to utilize preventive services such as mammograms, pap smears, and prostate exams.
- CULTURAL AWARENESS**: *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down* tells the story of Lia Lee, a Hmong child with epilepsy whose tragic death revealed the dangers of a lack of cross-cultural communication between an immigrant family and healthcare providers.



COLLABORATING

Healthcare providers, social workers, librarians, community members, employees of government agencies, and patients/caregivers **work together** to raise health literacy levels and create healthier populations.



PARTNERS IN PROMOTING HEALTH LITERACY

- PATIENT FAMILY ADVISORY COUNCILS**: Patient & Family Advisory Councils (PFACs) are an effective way of ensuring a successful patient/caregiver partnership. PFACs partner patients with clinical staff and hospital leadership to improve the patient experience and focus patient care.
- ALLIED HEALTH PROFESSIONALS**: Allied Health Professionals such as Nurses and Social Workers are in a unique position to introduce and educate patients on the importance of health literacy.
- LIBRARIANS**: Trained in assessing literacy and reading levels, librarians play a vital role in the effort to raise the nation's health literacy by curating validated information and teaching both clinicians and patients how to find appropriate information.
- GOVERNMENT AGENCIES**: National, state, and local agencies provide resources for training health literacy practitioners and provide consumer health educational materials for patients and caregivers.
- COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKERS**: Community Health Workers are trusted members of a community who work with clinicians in health programs to promote access and service to patients. Community advocates raise awareness of cultural norms to healthcare providers and provide educational and outreach services to their neighbors.



RESPONDING

The **National Library of Medicine (NLM)**, the **world's largest biomedical library**, is a trusted source for health information in the United States. NLM supports numerous health literacy resources and provides educational materials in a variety of languages.



Moving into the future, information delivery methods change. Health literacy efforts will continue to evolve by providing health information in different ways.

- TELEMEDICINE**
- WEARABLE DEVICES**
- GAMIFICATION**



The Exhibit consists of four colorful 7' by 3' panels that illustrate the story of the link between health literacy and positive health outcomes, containing QR codes to video tutorials on demonstrations of using National Library of Medicine (NLM) databases to answer consumer health questions and a collection of NLM consumer handouts. An electronic version of the Exhibit resides on a subject guide located on the Samuel J. Wood Library's website - <http://med.cornell.libguides.com/healthliteracyexhibit>.

Developed resources reported in this poster are supported by the National Library of Medicine (NLM), National Institutes of Health (NIH) under cooperative agreement # UG4LM012342 with the University of Pittsburgh, Health Sciences Library System. The content is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily represent the official views of the NIH.